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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/684,017	01/08/2001	James F. Zucherman	KLYC 1000USN SRM	9622
23910	7590	07/01/2003	EXAMINER	
FLIESLER DUBB MEYER & LOVEJOY, LLP FOUR EMBARCADERO CENTER SUITE 400 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111			WOO, JULIAN W	
		ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER	
		3731	14	
DATE MAILED: 07/01/2003				

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/684,017

Applicant(s)

ZUCHERMAN ET AL.

Examiner

Julian W. Woo

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 07 April 2003.
- 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
- 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 90,91,93-96,98-108 and 114-119 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) Claim(s) 93,94,99-105,107 and 115-118 is/are allowed.
- 6) Claim(s) 90,91,95,96,98,106,108,114 and 119 is/are rejected.
- 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) approved b) disapproved by the Examiner.
If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 - a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

- 14) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
 - a) The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Terminal Disclaimer

1. The terminal disclaimer filed on April 7, 2003 disclaiming the terminal portion of any patent granted on this application which would extend beyond the expiration date of U.S. Patent No. 6,149,652 has been reviewed and is accepted. The terminal disclaimer has been recorded.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

2. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

3. Claim 106 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. It is not certain how "a removing step" allows "a device to reconfigure about one of said spinous process and said another spinous process."

What is being removed?

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

4. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

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5. Claims 95, 96, 98, and 114 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Samani (5,645,599). With respect to claims 95, 96, and 98, Samani discloses, in figure 5 and in col. 4, lines 44-51, an improved method for stabilizing a spinous process relative to another spinous process, where the method includes introducing between the processes a device (15) or implant with flexible walls and shape memory and adapted to absorb shock. With respect to claim 114, the implant assumes a second shape upon compression.

6. Claim 108 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Krapiva (5,645,597). Krapiva discloses, in the figures, in col. 1, lines 12-16, and in col. 4, lines 7-42, a device (10), filled with gel and not connected to the spinous processes, which is able to dampen relative motion between spinous processes.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

7. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.

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4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.
8. Claim 90, 91, and 119 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Voydeville (5,609,634). Voydeville disclose, in figures 7-9 and in col. 2, line 59 to col. 4, line 4, a method for stabilizing a spinous process relative to another spinous process, where the method includes introducing between the spinous processes a flaccid implant (1) adapted to conform to a shape of spinous process (at 2). However, Voydeville does not disclose that the implant defines a minimum space between the spinous processes at a maximum extension of the spine. Nevertheless, it would have been a matter of design choice for a surgeon to carry out the "interspinous encircling" with the implant, so that the desired limits of spinal rotation and flexion/extension are achieved, even spacing between the processes.

Allowable Subject Matter

9. Claims 93, 94, 99, 100-105, 107, and 115-118 are allowed.
10. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance: None of the prior art of record, alone or in combination, discloses a method of stabilizing a spinous process relative to another spinous process, where the method includes introducing between the processes a device having a sealable cavity that is fillable with material and introducing a device with shape memory and allowing it to assume an implanted shape and distract the processes, where the implanted shape is assumed at a threshold temperature.

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Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Response to Amendment

11. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 90, 91, 95, 96, 98, 106, 108, 114, and 119 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Conclusion

12. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. Howland et al. (5,496,318) teach an interspinous device.

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13. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Julian W. Woo whose telephone number is (703) 308-0421. The examiner can normally be reached Mon.-Fri., 7:00 AM to 3:00 PM Eastern Time, alternate Fridays off.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Michael J. Milano can be reached at (703) 308-2496.

General inquiries relating to the status of this application should be directed to the Group receptionist at (703) 308-0858. The official FAX number is (703) 872-9302.



Julian W. Woo
Patent Examiner

June 23, 2003